

Earth Day 2001: Not A Day For Celebration President Bush Takes Aim At Thirty Years of Environmental Progress and Protections

Earth Day 2001 is Sunday, April 22nd. This year is the 31st anniversary of Earth Day. Begun in 1970, the celebration marks the birth of the modern environmental movement. Earth Day is an event that transcends political affiliations and demographics to bring together Democrats and Republicans, the rich and poor, city dwellers and farmers, tycoons and labor leaders. Working together over the last three decades, America has made great progress on the environmental front. Successes include the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water and Endangered Species Acts.

But in 2001, at the start of a new millennium, suddenly and alarmingly much of the environmental progress of the last thirty years faces a major threat - in fact it's under direct attack. The man at the center of this outrageous assault on our environmental health and well-being is none other than our new president - George W. Bush, a man who as candidate promised to protect the environment, but as president is showing his true allegiance to big business, big oil, and big polluters in general.

So, sadly on Earth Day 2001, instead of celebrating our progress over the years, we must regroup, retrench, join forces, and prepare to fight back. There is too much at stake. This is about more than today's environment, it's about our future and the legacy we want to leave for our children, our grandchildren, and generations to come. The reality is for the first time in 30 years a president has jammed the proverbial environmental gearshift into reverse and we're now hurtling backwards when it comes to protecting our land, our water, our air, and the health of the American public.

In the words of Democratic Leader Richard Gephardt: "It is a weekly, and now daily, drumbeat of roll-backs of hard-fought and hard-won progress to protect the air and the water and the wilderness and the environment of this country. This is the most alarming roll-back in environmental efforts that we have ever seen." (Press Conference, 3/28/01)

This Earth Day 2001 report contains the following sections:

- C Overview of George W. Bush's environmental attacks and roll-backs
- Analysis of George W. Bush's assault on the environmental budget
- Examination of Congressional Republicans' threats to the environment
- Summary of Democratic efforts to protect the environment

I. Overview of George W. Bush's Environmental Attacks and Roll-Backs

Where to begin. If it's not once a day, it's most certainly once or twice a week that George W. Bush or someone in his administration announces the latest White House torpedo attack on the environment. And each time it's clear what's motivating Team Bush - not the will or the interests of the American people, but an obvious desire to reward the big business special-interests that bankrolled the Bush campaign. These efforts are transparent.

Consider this: "A recent Washington Post/ABC News poll found that, by 61 percent to 31 percent, Americans thought Bush cared more about the interests of large corporations than ordinary people. Although Republicans usually have a 20-percentage-point gap on such questions, White House advisers said the increase disturbed them." (Washington Post, 3/31/01)

As a candidate, George W. Bush promised be a "steward of the earth" if elected president. But so far his track record proves just the opposite. Here's a look at the Bush environmental record to date. It's a story of roll-backs, flip-flops and big-money connections to special-interests:

Arsenic

On March 20th, the Bush Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it was revoking new rules that reduced the acceptable level of arsenic in drinking water. The decision came as a shock to the scientists, environmentalists, public health advocates, and regular citizens who had fought for decades to reduce arsenic in the water we drink.

President Bush, on the other hand, thinks arsenic in drinking water is a laughing matter. Here's what he said at the annual Radio and Television Correspondents Association dinner: "I think you [reporters] serve a very useful purpose, especially tonight. As you know, we're studying safe levels of arsenic in drinking water. To base our decision on sound science, the scientists told us we needed to test the water glasses of about 3000 people. Thank you for participating." (Transcript from: *The New York Times*)

Maureen Dowd, in the New York Times, fired back: "I guess a guy who can yuk it up about a woman he has executed in Texas can yuk it up about anything. But it was a creepy moment." Dowd goes on to say regarding arsenic: "W. wants to keep the poison in - to help the enviro-villains who contributed to his campaign." (New York Times, 4/1/01)

The new arsenic rule was reasonable - it's the same standard as used in the European Union and by the World Health Organization. The EPA mandated that arsenic should not exceed 10 parts per billion as compared to the current 50 parts per billion which dates back to 1942. Studies show arsenic at the higher level is dangerous to public health and can cause several forms of cancer (including bladder, lung and prostate) as well as other permanent health problems. Children are especially vulnerable. A 1999 National Academy

of Sciences (NAS) study recommended lowering the arsenic standard "as promptly as possible." (NAS Study, 1999)

According to the EPA, this new, stricter standard would have provided additional protection for 13 million Americans against the long-term effects of arsenic. But special interests didn't like the rule and President Bush listened. As Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA) puts it: "This is another example of special interest payback to industries that gave millions of dollars in campaign contributions." In revoking these rules, Bush proved he's ushered in a new era in Washington - an era when nothing is sacred in the face of special interest pressure, not even the public's health.

The Money Trail

The Environmental Protection Agency's motto is "to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment." But sadly it appears the Bush EPA is willing to jeopardize human health and trash the environment if its "protection" responsibilities interfere with the interests of big business. In this case, mining companies, chemical interests and groups like the American Wood Preservers Institute pressured the Bush administration to pull the new arsenic rule - and it worked. No surprise when you consider that mining interests gave Republicans nearly \$6 million during the 2000 election cycle including \$212,000 to the Bush campaign. The chemical industry gave even more - nearly \$9 million to Republicans including \$551,000 to Bush. The forestry products industry gave Bush nearly \$300,000 and almost \$7 million to Republicans overall. (Center for Responsive Politics) All you have to do is follow the money trail to understand why the Bush administration would revoke a protection so clearly in the interests of the American people.

Carbon Dioxide

"With the help of Congress, environmental groups and industry, we will require all power plants to meet clean air standards in order to reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, mercury and carbon dioxide within a reasonable period of time." (Candidate Bush, 9/29/2000)

"I do not believe, however, that the government should impose on power plants mandatory emissions reductions for carbon dioxide, which is not a 'pollutant' under the Clean Air Act." (President Bush, 3/13/01)

In a stark reversal of a campaign promise, Bush has announced he will not pursue mandatory reductions of carbon dioxide emissions from our nation's power plants. Yet CO2 is the dominant greenhouse gas and studies show it's a primary contributor to global warming. In fact, a recent U.N. study on global warming concludes: "Emissions of CO2 due to fossil-fuel burning are virtually certain to be the dominant influence on the trends in atmospheric CO2 concentration during the 21st Century." (IPCC study, 2001)

President Bush knows what he should do in this case, but instead of living up to his campaign promise to do the right thing he's decided to ignore the scientific warnings and cave-in to special interests. By doing so the president jeopardizes future generations and the health of our planet. So why did the president flip-flop on his CO2 promise? Because

his big-business buddies opposed it and Bush couldn't afford to disappoint them. Or, in the words of *Newsweek*, "Corporate America poured a ton of money into Bush's coffers. Now it's payback time inside the Beltway." (*Newsweek*, 3/26/01)

If Bush listened to the American people he would have stuck with his promise to regulate CO2 emissions. A new survey shows two-thirds of Americans believe Bush should develop a plan to reduce the emission of gases like carbon dioxide and three-fourths of Americans consider global warming to be a serious problem. (Time-CNN poll quoted in Associated Press, 4/1/01)

Money Trail

Consider the money trail that led to this flip-flop. The Bush CO2 reversal rewards power plant operators, the energy industry, railroads and some utilities - big business interests that contributed millions to the Bush campaign and his fellow Republicans. In the 2000 election cycle, these interests contributed \$1.9 million to Bush and \$18.1 million to Republicans, including key GOP senators who successfully pressured Bush to walk away from his promise. Additionally the Global Climate Coalition, an industry-backed group that opposes CO2 reductions, gave \$3.1 million to the Republicans. (Center for Responsive Politics) Then there's the Tom Kuhn factor. Kuhn was a classmate of Bush's at Yale and just happens to be the current president of the Edison Electric Institute, the lobbying arm of the electric-utility industry. During the campaign, Kuhn raised a lot of money for Bush and then once his friend became president, "Kuhn called senior White House aides to urge that Bush back away from the emissions cap." (Newsweek, 3/26/01) And it worked. In the aftermath, editorial pages across the country decried the Bush flip-flop calling it "disappointing," "a slap in the face," and "a broken promise." The consensus: in the Bush White House, money talks.

Kyoto Protocol

After years of hard work and tough negotiations, President Bush suddenly announced the U.S. will completely abandon the Kyoto treaty on climate change. This represents Bush's second broken campaign promise. The Kyoto treaty was first negotiated in 1997 by more than a hundred developed and developing nations. It calls for the reduction of greenhouse gases, in particular CO2.

This surprise reversal of U.S. policy provoked anger and frustration from leaders at home and abroad. In a letter to Bush, former president Jimmy Carter, former news anchor Walter Cronkite, former astronaut and senator John Glenn, scientist Stephen Hawking and others write "No challenge we face is more momentous than the threat of global climate change The current provisions of the Kyoto Protocol are a matter of legitimate debate. But the situation is becoming urgent and it is time for consensus and action." (Associated Press, 4/1/01)

Indeed, the Kyoto protocol isn't perfect. For example developing countries could be required to contribute to CO2 emission reductions. However, Bush should work to fix the flaws in the treaty, not simply walk away from the table. His unilateral approach on the complex issue of global warming could do real harm to the world environment.

Overseas, European leaders used words like "irresponsible," "arrogant," and even "sabotage" to describe Bush's decision. Even they have figured out who Bush is working for. "If one wants to be a world leader, one must know how to look after the entire earth and not only American industry," said EU Commission President Romano Prodi. (*New York Times, 4/1/01*) Margot Wallstrom, Europe's commissioner for environmental affairs, put it this way: "To suggest scrapping the Kyoto and making a new agreement with more countries involved simply reflects a lack of understanding of political realities. We could lose years of work if we were to start from scratch." (*New York Times, 4/1/01*)

Here are some other overseas condemnations to describe the Bush back-flip: "in-your-face truculence," "ultimate rogue state," "disturbing and unacceptable," "a catastrophe." (Associated Press, 3/30/01 and New York Times, 4/01/01)

The Money Trail

President Bush says he backed out of the Kyoto treaty because it would hurt the American economy and because Congress would never ratify the agreement. That's a cop-out and it's not the real story. The reality is, just like with his CO2 flip-flop, the president is acting with his big-business friends and supporters in mind. Congress, controlled by the GOP in both Houses, could be encouraged to act with presidential leadership. Some of Bush's biggest campaign contributors were industries that oppose any CO2 emission caps and therefore the Kyoto treaty - the oil and gas industry, power plant operators, some utilities, mining companies, and the railroads. Together these groups gave more than \$18 million to Republicans in the 2000 election cycle including nearly \$2 million directly to Bush. Also, the Global Climate Coalition, an industry-backed group that opposes CO2 reductions, gave \$3.1 million to the Republicans. (Center for Responsive Politics)

Hard-Rock Mining

The Bush Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has withdrawn – and announced a 45-day review of – rules governing what miners can and can't do on public property. This leaves America's public lands and American citizens at risk from mining disasters. Under President Clinton, the Interior Department spent four years formulating these rules. The result, after much public comment, was a set of environmental rules designed to allow mining to continue where appropriate, but also protect the environment and people living near or down river from mines.

The rules strengthened environmental standards and allowed the BLM to deny permits for mines that would threaten the environment or cultural resources. The rules also made it tougher for mining companies to avoid financial liability for violations of environmental and public health laws, and included measures to force more hard-rock miners to post cleanup bonds. As environmentalists point out: "Mining companies often go bankrupt and that means they often walk away leaving a mess that later become Superfund sites." (Associated Press, 3/20/01) Not surprisingly, mining companies – accustomed to lax rules – oppose these new requirements and lobbied successfully for the Bush administration to yank them.

The Money Trail

The Bush BLM decision clearly represents a cave-in to mining interests. Pressure from the mining industry was intense and multi-pronged. The National Mining Association had sued to have the regulations declared invalid. Three other lawsuits are also pending. Additionally, in the 2000 election cycle, mining interests contributed big dollars to the Bush campaign and Republicans in general. George W. Bush was the biggest single recipient of direct contributions from the mining industry - some \$600,000. Overall, mining interests contributed \$5.7 million to Republicans. (Center for Responsive Politics) Clearly this is another case of Republican pay-backs to special interests at the expense of America's families and the environment.

Bush Environmental Roll-Backs - What's Next?

Is it possible for President Bush do any more harm to the environment? Sadly, it appears the answer is yes. Watch for the following environmental protections to vanish as the Bush roll-backs roll on.

National Wild Forests

In the same spirit as Teddy Roosevelt, President Clinton used his authority to protect 58 million acres of America's prized national forests from future logging, mining, drilling and roadbuilding. It was a heroic act designed to preserve America's wild beauty for generations to come. But the Bush administration is poised to reverse this Clinton legacy because it interferes with the plans of its big-business buddies.

The logging, mining, oil and gas industries along with some Western states as well as off-road enthusiasts are all fighting the Clinton road-building ban in every way they can: through the courts, campaign contributions, and lobbying. Currently the rules are on hold until May 12th while the Bush administration figures out what to do about them. All indications are Bush will try to overturn the rules to keep his contributors happy. In the meantime a federal judge in Boise is considering whether to issue a preliminary injunction to prevent the rules from taking effect pending the outcome of several special-interest lawsuits. Team Bush tried unsuccessfully to delay court action. The judge said no. Tim Preso with Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund concludes: "By asking for another delay rather than vigorously defending the rule, the Bush administration is giving us every reason to believe they're planning to bring bulldozers back into our national forests." (Associated Press, 3/17/01)

The Clinton road-ban rule was published January 12th just before Clinton left office, but it was two years in the making. This was not a last minute regulation as Republicans and special-interests would have you believe. In fact, the government received 1.6 million public comments and held 600 public hearings on the proposal. A Seattle Times editorial puts it this way: "Roadless policies were not an off-the-cuff remark or idle promise. They were carefully worked out, broadly supported, and should not be evaded." (Seattle Times, 3/21/01)

Most Americans support this road-making ban and for good reason. What it does is set

aside a portion of our roadless areas for conservation and recreation. It doesn't keep the public out, it just prevents the timber industry from going in, building roads, and clear-cutting trees.

The Money Trail

So why is Bush angling to reverse Clinton's brave act of land conservation? Because he owes favors to some big-time campaign contributors. Consider this: the forestry and forest products industry gave the Republicans nearly \$7 million in donations during the 2000 election cycle. The biggest recipient of those funds, nearly \$300,000, was George W. Bush. Similarly, the Oil and Gas industry, another opponent of the road-ban, gave more than \$25 million to Republicans including \$1.8 million to Bush. And mining interests forked over more than \$5.7 million to Republicans with more than \$200,000 going to Bush. That's big money and now those special-interests are ready to cash-in on their investment. As Doug Honnold with Earthjustice puts it: "This [roadless] rule may not be popular with the extractive interests who helped get Bush into office, but it is extremely popular with the American public and it should be allowed to be implemented." (Earthjustice Press Release, 3/30/01) A Los Angeles Times editorial also warns Bush not to "revert to the giveaway of the people's resources" and calls upon the president to defend the roadless rule. (Los Angeles Times, 4/2/01)

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

President Bush may be starting to get the message - at a recent press conference he acknowledged it may be difficult to persuade the Congress to open the Arctic Refuge to oil drilling. Nevertheless he persists in trying. President Bush wants to change the rules and open this pristine Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. Often called "America's Serengeti," the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is home to hundreds of animal species. Scientists, environmentalists, and most Americans oppose drilling in the Refuge because it will damage an American treasure, threaten wildlife, and pollute the air and water, while doing next to nothing to address America's energy needs.

The specific area where Bush wants to drill is the 1.5 million acre coastal plain - the biological heart of the Arctic Refuge. Already 95% of Alaska's North Slope is open to oil exploration - does it really make sense to open the remaining 5% and risk oil spills and environmental disasters? Past presidents and Congresses didn't think so. President Eisenhower established the Refuge in 1960 "to preserve its unique wildlife, wilderness, and recreational values." In 1980, Congress expanded the refuge and explicitly prohibited oil and gas production there. Now President Bush wants to overturn that protection for a supply of oil that the United States Geological Survey estimates wouldn't be available for ten years. If the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is opened to oil drilling, experts predict another Prudhoe Bay - a place that averages 400 oil spills a year, has produced 55 contaminated waste sites, and comprises hundreds of miles of infrastructure.

According to a recent bi-partisan survey, American voters oppose drilling for oil in the Arctic Refuge by a 52 to 35 percent margin. (**Mellman Group and Bellwether Research**) Even House Republicans acknowledge drilling in the Arctic Refuge isn't the answer to our energy problems - they wisely removed projected Arctic oil revenues from their budget plan.

The Money Trail

So why does President Bush insist on drilling in the Arctic even though the American public says it's a bad idea? Because Bush is a big oil man from big oil country with lots of big oil friends. From the president on down, the West Wing is filled with former big oil executives: Bush was in the oil business in Texas, Vice President Cheney was CEO of Halliburton, Commerce Secretary Don Evans is a former Tom Brown executive, and National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice was on the Chevron board of directors. Others like Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham and Interior Secretary Gale Norton, were big oil money recipients when they ran for public office. For these power players and other top administration officials with big oil connections the answer to the pending energy crisis is drill, drill. A balanced energy policy would promote conservation, renewables and production.

In a Los Angeles Times opinion piece titled "It's Payback Time for Bush Contributors," Robert Scheer writes: "This is an administration that seems to thrill at high energy prices. It is even gutting federal programs that promote energy efficiency by a devastating 30%." He concludes: "...for the Bush administration, it's payback time on every front for his greedy legions." (Los Angeles Times, 3/27/01) Even the conservative Wall Street Journal can't ignore Bush's ties to big oil. The paper writes: "Of all the business interests that back Mr. Bush, oil companies have the clearest ties and strongest personal meaning to the new president. He is a former oil man who revels in his attachment to Texas, and his best friends are oil men, too. Promoting the industry is an instinctive impulse for the president..." (Wall Street Journal, 3/6/01) According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Bush was by far the top recipient of money from the oil and gas industry receiving \$3.2 million (\$1.8 million in campaign contributions plus inaugural and other contributions) of the \$27 million it gave to Republicans in the 2000 election cycle. Additionally, 28 of Bush's Fundraising Pioneers, those raising \$100,000 or more, are connected to the energy industry. (New York Times, 6/23/00) Enron has long been one of Bush's biggest corporate supporters and now Enron's Chief Executive has been appointed to the Bush Energy Advisory Team. The San Francisco Chronicle reports: "(People) have noted the money connection between Bush, a former oil industry executive, and the vast Texas energy industry. Enron's Kenneth Lay, who boasts he can get Bush on the phone whenever he wants, raised more than \$400,000 for the GOP and the Bush campaign." (San Francisco Chronicle) Many other members of the Bush Energy Advisory Team are also big-time campaign contributors from the energy industry. In summary, Energy and Natural Resource interests gave more than \$48 million to Republicans in the 2000 election cycle. The oil and gas industry gave more than \$25 million. (Center for Responsive Politics) Finally, a pro-business, pro-drilling coalition is pumping \$4 million into an advertising campaign designed to generate support for opening the Arctic Refuge to oil drilling. (Wall Street Journal, 3/19/01) All you have to do is follow the money trail to understand why Bush wants to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

National Monuments

Not only does President Bush want to drill in the Arctic Refuge, he's on the record suggesting America should drill for oil and gas in protected National Monument lands. In an interview Bush said, "There are parts of the monument lands where we can explore (for

oil and gas) without affecting the overall environment." (Denver Post, 3/15/01). During his presidency, Bill Clinton acted to protect millions of acres of prized federal land across the United States. He established 19 national monuments totaling more than 5 million acres. A recent U.S. Geological Survey study shows 6 of the Clinton monuments may contain abundant energy resources - information that may give Bush added ammunition. The Bush administration has indicated it will not attempt to directly overturn Clinton monuments; however, it is now mounting a stealth attack on the Clinton monuments. Interior Secretary Gale Norton has asked several state officials to suggest boundary and other changes, a first step to accommodate mining and logging operations in these areas. And Rep. Jim Hansen (R-Utah) is proposing legislation to alter boundaries or change management rules at several monuments. He also plans to push legislation limiting the size of monuments created through presidential authority to 50,000 acres. It is also possible the Bush administration won't provide any funding for these monuments. In the West, some newspapers are sounding the alarm. An editorial in the Phoenix, Arizona paper said: "Despite the hyperbolic rhetoric, these monument designations are not land grabs foisted upon an unsuspecting public ... In 50 years, when the urban fringe nears these jewels, we'll be glad the monuments were left alone." (The Arizona Republic, 3/25/01)

The Money Trail

Oil and gas companies, logging operations, mining interests, and other extraction industries would love to drill, cut and dig on National Monument lands. And they've got the ear of President Bush. As detailed in previous sections of this report, the Bush administration is top-heavy with former big oil executives from the President on down. Additionally, energy and natural resource interests accounted for some of the biggest campaign donors to the Republicans and George W. Bush, in particular, during the 2000 election campaign.

Some Other Potential Roll-Backs

The Washington Post reports Bush has been stung by the criticism he's received for his roll-backs-therefore his new strategy is to put off decisions on other Clinton environmental regulations until the heat is off. (**The Washington Post, 3/31/01)** That means Democrats must maintain an ongoing vigilance. Here's a quick look at some other potential environment and energy roll-backs Team Bush is considering.

Appliance Efficiency

The Bush administration has temporarily suspended rules that call for new efficiency standards for residential air conditioners, heat pumps, clothes washers, water heaters, and commercial heating and cooling equipment. These standards would cut millions of tons of global warming pollution and save consumers and businesses more than \$19 billion through the year 2030. Taken together, the energy savings generated by the new standards would save the equivalent of the power produced by 91 new power plants. (Natural Resources Defense Council) At a time when this nation is facing an energy crisis, it's unacceptable that the Bush administration would interfere with sensible, money-saving efforts to improve energy efficiency.

Lead Pollution

The Bush administration has also suspended rules requiring more than 9,000 industrial facilities that use 100 pounds or more of the toxic metal lead to report their air pollution level to the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI), our nation's community right-to-know program. Since then, more than sixty industry trade associations have written to the EPA expressing their opposition to the regulations. EPA Administrator Christine Whitman has yet to make a final decision about these rules. Lead emissions are especially dangerous for children and their neurological development. **(U.S. Public Interest Research Group)**

Mercury Emissions

The Bush EPA has until 2003 to propose regulations limiting mercury emissions from power plants. Under President Clinton, the EPA determined that mercury emissions could be regulated under the Clean Air Act. "For more than 10 years the electric utility industry has been trying to derail efforts to regulate their mercury emissions, despite mounting evidence of the public health and ecological risk of mercury exposure," says Andy Buchsbaum of the National Wildlife Federation (Reuters, 3/23/01) A National Academy of Sciences study shows mercury emitted from power plants poses a significant threat to pregnant women and children. It also pollutes waterways and contaminates fish.

Wetlands Protection

A new rule that closes a loophole in the Clean Water Act is under attack by developers, the mining industry and other special interests. That rule does away with the "Tulloch Exception" in the Clean Water Act which has been used to degrade and destroy wetlands and streams. Previously developers could avoid obtaining a permit when draining, ditching or excavating wetlands and streams as long as they did not dump fill on the site. According to EPA estimates, at least 20,000 acres of wetlands and 150 miles of streams have been targeted for destruction since 1998 because of this loophole. Environmentalists worry the EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will withdraw the rule. (Natural Resources Defense Council)

II. Overview of Bush's Assault on The Environmental Budget

The Bush Budget takes direct aim at programs designed to protect and preserve America's natural resources, our environmental wonders, not to mention the water we drink and the air we breathe. According to the Bush administration's sketchy budget "blueprint," published on February 28, discretionary appropriations for the Interior Department will be slashed in FY 2002 by \$400 million below the FY 2001 enacted level. Similarly, the EPA's discretionary appropriations will be slashed in FY 2002 by \$500 million below the FY 2001 enacted level. But what exactly is the Bush administration going to cut? That remains a mystery. Instead of detailing the cuts, the Bush budget blueprint is full of "magic asterisks" that hide the spending cuts that will be required by the Bush tax cut. Making matters worse, the full Bush budget won't be unveiled until April 9 - conveniently after the Congress has left for a two-week spring recess!! First no details, then a delay in showing the Congress what spending cuts in natural resources and the environmental programs the Bush administration is actually recommending.

No matter whether the Bush budget blueprint published February 28 or the specifics of the April 9th budget will be the operational guide to cuts for the GOP Congress, a budget plan imposing a 6.6% overall cut below current services in nonprotected domestic discretionary programs has already been adopted by the GOP Congress on March 28. Their actions so far suggest that the Congress may very well use the proposed Bush cuts described below as their guide in writing the details of spending levels for environmental programs.

Following is an overview of what we know about the environmental budget, based on the February 28th budget blueprint.

Interior Department Cuts

For FY 2002, the Bush budget provides \$9.8 billion in discretionary appropriations for the Interior Department – which is \$400 million (or 3.9%) below the FY 2001 enacted level. This funding level is \$737 million (or 7.0%) below the level needed, according to the Congressional Budget Office, to maintain purchasing power at the FY 2001 level. However, the President is also proposing two initiatives within the Interior Department (increases for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and National Park Service maintenance), for a total cost of nearly \$460 million in FY 2002.

The additional cost of these Bush initiatives means that the President's budget contains unspecified cuts in the Interior Department totaling \$1.2 billion – or 11.4% – below the level needed to maintain purchasing power at the FY 2001 level.

Spending cuts of this magnitude at the Interior Department are of particular concern because it is the Interior Department – and its components such as the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the National Park Service – that are the lead agencies in managing the country's natural treasures – from national parks to wild and scenic rivers to protected coastlines.

Environmental Protection Agency Cuts

For FY 2002, the Bush budget provides \$7.3 billion in discretionary appropriations for the Environmental Protection Agency – which is \$500 million (or 6.4%) below the FY 2001enacted level. This funding level is \$800 million – or 9.4% – below the level needed, according to the Congressional Budget Office, to maintain purchasing power at the FY2001 level.

Once again, the Bush budget's \$800 million in spending cuts in EPA programs below the level needed to maintain current services remain unspecified. The Bush blueprint simply asserts that the Bush Administration will keep the EPA's operating programs at the FY2001 level and will make ends meet by cutting the agency's "capital and other spending."

Spending cuts of this depth at EPA are of particular concern when one recognizes that it is the EPA that is charged with enforcing the nation's landmark environmental laws—such as the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Natural Resources and Environmental Programs Cuts Over Ten Years

Given the fact that the Bush budget cuts the Interior Department and EPA in FY 2002, it is not surprising to learn that the Bush budget cuts natural resources and environmental programs overall in FY 2002 (in addition to the Interior Department and EPA, the budget category of "natural resources and environmental programs" includes the Army Corps of Engineers, programs within NOAA, and conservation programs within the Agriculture Department.)

For FY 2002, the Bush budget proposes \$26.4 billion in appropriated funding for natural resources and environmental programs overall – a significant cut of \$2.3 billion (or 8.0%) below the FY 2001 enacted level of \$28.7 billion. This level of appropriations is \$3.3 billion (11.1%) below the level needed, according to CBO, to maintain current purchasing power.

Indeed, under the Bush budget, the level of appropriations for natural resources and environmental programs remains below the FY 2001 enacted level of \$28.7 billion for the next six years. Over the next ten years, the Bush budget provides \$52.8 billion less for these programs than the Congressional Budget Office estimates is necessary to maintain services at the FY 2001 level.

The Bush Administration claims that this decrease is justifiable because there is no need to repeat funding for 2001 emergencies in future years. However, even after backing out emergency funding, the levels in the Bush budget still translate into large cuts in purchasing power for natural resources and environmental programs.

Bush Budget Fails to Fund Last Year's Bipartisan Six-Year Conservation Agreement

As part of its failure to adequately fund natural resources and environmental programs over the next several years, the Bush Administration fails to fully fund the bipartisan six-year conservation agreement reached last year and enacted in the FY 2001 Interior Appropriations bill (PL 106-291).

Last year's landmark conservation agreement culminated more than two years of work by Members of Congress, state and local officials, and interested citizens to secure new resources for conservation programs that had been underfunded for years.

Under last year's agreement, Congress agreed to provide \$12 billion in dedicated funding over six years for conservation, preservation, and recreation programs. This funding was set aside in a new "conservation" budget category that started at \$1.6 billion in FY 2001 and is scheduled to increase by \$160 million each year until it reaches \$2.4 billion in FY2006. The Bush budget has backtracked on last year's agreement and has rewritten the funding schedule for the conservation category – effectively skimming \$2.7 billion from it over five years to pay for the President's oversized tax cut.

Bush Budget Calls for Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Finally, the President's budget assumes the opening of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil drilling, a move that would threaten an irreplaceable natural treasure while adding a limited amount to the nation's oil supply – a move strongly opposed by a broad coalition of national environmental organizations. Although the opening of ANWR to oil drilling is assumed in the President's budget, the administration cannot implement this proposal without new legislation from Congress.

III. Republican Congress Also a Threat to Environment

It's not President Bush alone who poses a threat to the environment and natural resources. Some Republican members of Congress are working in concert with the Bush administration's attack on the environment. Others are pushing their own anti-environmental agenda.

Congressional Review Act (CRA)

The Congressional Review Act may become the Republicans' legislative weapon of choice. Republicans gave the CRA its first test-drive earlier this session, using it to overturn worker-safety standards. It worked so well they're prepared to use it again to roll-back other Clinton-era protections. Conservative GOP members of the House Government Reform Subcommittee on Energy Policy, Natural Resources and Regulatory Affairs have discussed using the CRA to wipe-out Clinton's road-building ban on 58 million acres of national forests. The same group of lawmakers is also contemplating a CRA repeal of diesel fuel

standards designed to reduce sulfur emissions by 90%. (Environment and Energy Daily, 3/28/01)

Additional Congressional Republican Threats

Ever since the Republicans took control of Congress in January 1995, the Republican leadership has sought to weaken, repeal and undermine the laws that, over the past 30 years, have made America's air and water safer, reduced toxins in the environment and preserved our public lands. In many cases, the Republican leadership has been doing the bidding of special interests in promoting initiatives to undermine environmental laws. The 107th Congress in 2001 appears to be no different.

One technique the Republicans have perfected is the use of anti-environmental riders or legislating through the appropriations process. Since taking control of Congress, they've attempted to put literally hundreds of riders on appropriations bills. Here are some examples of Republican anti-environmental efforts during the 106th Congress:

- Clean Air Republicans attached a rider to the EPA appropriations bill prohibiting EPA from enforcing new non-attainment standards governing ground level ozone, or smog. The rider also prohibited EPA from gathering information on ozone levels and informing the public when air quality violates the new health standards. (League of Conservation Voters)
- Arsenic Republicans attached two other anti-environment riders to the EPA appropriations bill one that prevented the EPA from enacting new arsenic standards for drinking water, the other halting EPA clean-up of toxic sediments in waterways. (League of Conservation Voters)
- Roadless Areas Republicans threatened riders to the Interior appropriations bill that would block or delay Clinton's designation of 58 million acres of prized forest land as off-limits to road building, logging and other industry. (League of Conservation Voters)
- National Monuments Opponents of Clinton monuments unsuccessfully tried to amend the Interior appropriations bill to withhold funding for management of these monument lands. (League of Conservation Voters)
- Hard-Rock Mining Republican opponents of Clinton rules governing mining introduced legislation to block the part of the rules that allowed the BLM to deny an operating permit to a proposed mine if it would have an adverse environmental or cultural impact. (League of Conservation Voters)
- Arctic National Wildlife Refuge In 2000, the Alaska delegation attached a rider to the Senate budget resolution that included revenues from drilling in the Arctic Refuge, an important first step towards drilling. The provision was taken out in conference committee. (League of Conservation Voters)
- Alaska's Tongass National Forest An unsuccessful rider to the FY2000 Interior Appropriations Act called for subsidizing increased logging in Alaska's Tongass National Forest, an area President Clinton later acted to protect. (League of Conservation Voters)

Other anti-environmental riders from previous Congresses include:

- C Increased clearcut logging in our National Forests
- Crippled protection of endangered species
- © Stalled the Superfund program
- C Rolled-back energy efficiency standards
- Blocked the regulation of radioactive contaminants in drinking water
- C Delayed for 9 years our efforts to clean up air pollution in national parks
- Prevented the EPA from ensuring groundwater is not contaminated by old nuclear facilities
- C Waived environmental review of grazing permits
- C Blocked long-overdue mining reform
- Protected oil companies from paying a fair amount on oil royalties

Clinton Administration Played Strong Defense

The Clinton Administration successfully obtained removal of the most onerous riders. But the League of Conservation Voters writes an ominous conclusion to the 106th Congress: "The President's ability to veto bills that he opposed, and his frequent use of the veto threat, often stalled anti-environment legislation well before it could reach his desk. The 106th Congress saw the President use his administrative powers to further his environmental agenda despite strong opposition from Congressional leaders." (League of Conservation Voters) But what happens now that George W. Bush is in the White House? With the Clinton veto threat gone, it seems very likely much of the anti-environmental legislation that couldn't get traction in previous sessions may pass the Congress and end up on the desk of a president who's willing to sign these bills into law. This should stand as a major point of concern for anyone who is concerned about protecting the environment.

IV. Democrats to Fight Back

Already members of Congress have launched an investigation into Bush's decision-making on arsenic, mining and logging. Democrats will stand strong in the 107th Congress to stop the roll-backs and repair what damage the president has already done.

Rep. Waxman's Defense of the Environment Act

A top environmental priority for Democrats is the long-overdue enactment of the Defense on the Environment Act, sponsored by Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA). In past years Republicans were successful in defeating the Defense of the Environment Act - but Democrats and environmental groups will continue to push for enactment. The Defense of the Environment Act would require informed debate and an accountable vote on special-interest, anti-environmental riders that are attached to legislation. The Defense of the Environment Act has become a key priority of environmental groups ever since Republicans gained control of Congress in 1995 and began bringing anti-environmental riders to the House Floor. These riders arrive without any identification and without the

opportunity of the House to analyze and debate the environmental impact of these provisions. Under the Defense of the Environment Act, these anti-environmental riders would have received a separate debate and vote - allowing full and open consideration by the House. Contrary to claims of opponents, the Waxman bill places no burdens on businesses and does not prevent Congress from repealing or amending any environmental law. It simply provides for an informative debate and an accountable vote.

Other Environmental Protections

Once Democrats mount a successful defensive response to the Bush anti-environmental agenda, attention can shift to more pro-active environmental protections such as expansion of the Lands Legacy Initiative to better preserve the nation's natural treasures. Another Democratic priority is the Livable Communities Initiative which would strengthen the federal government's role as a partner with the growing number of state and local efforts to build "livable communities" and reduce urban sprawl.

V. Conclusion

The year 2001 threatens to go down in history as the "Year of Environmental Degradation." For the last six years the Republicans in Congress have conducted a guerrilla war on the environment, but with limited success. Whereas in the past President Clinton was able to block much of the Congressional Republican damage, now these anti-environmentalists have a friend in the White House. And President Bush is turning this guerrilla war into a full-blown, out-in-the-open attack. He's leading the anti-environmental charge. Bush is the new general in this war on America's environment - the air, water and our land. The obvious victim is the environment, but ultimately it's the American people and especially our children. When the water we drink is poisoned, the air we breathe is fouled and the land we live on contaminated - human life and ultimately the life of our planet is threatened. Democrats in the 107th Congress will stand strong to prevent the Republicans from succeeding in their war on the environment - a war they're conducting at the behest of big business and special-interests. Though Democrats are outnumbered, they will prevail because the American people are opposed to the President's assaults on our air, water and wilderness.